



Annual Report 2014/15



Small sponsored garden at the lock

Here again is our report of Parish Council (PC) activities over the past year.

The report contains a very brief summary of how the Council has conducted projects over the year, managed the Parish Council's finances and village assets, and gives the usual information about Councillors, the Council's operations, and other useful contacts.

The Council's continuing aims are:

- To provide a safe environment for parishioners to live and work and play;
- To provide, or help our Local Authority (West Berkshire) to provide, good facilities and services;
- To spend money wisely and provide good value.

Hopefully, you will see a glimpse of these aims being achieved this year through this report.

Even a small organisation like Purley on Thames PC is subject to changes – often in legislation about what we have to do, or how. This year has rather seen changes in people: regrettably, two councillors left us for personal reasons, and we thank them for their efforts. To balance this we were delighted to welcome new councillors on board, and you will see their names and faces at the back of the report*.

Sadly, one of our District Councillors, David Betts, passed away during the year, and will be missed. Rick Jones will step down as Chairman of the PC at the end of the year, to take on the District role.

Find out more of village interest and what's happening from the PC website: www.purleyonthames-pc.gov.uk.

As always we need to thank our staff, especially our Clerks and Caretaker, the Councillors, many volunteers and contractors, and also West Berkshire Council, Neighbourhood Wardens and the Police. All these people helped again to provide services for us, or to maintain the village facilities and assets in good order.

General:

• Community Safety

The Environment Agency has installed a new bund (flood defence barrier) in the meadow behind Wintringham Way. This is intended to delay the effects of flooding at the river and of the road, and adjacent roads. In 2015, so far, this has not been tested – ideally, it won't be! Other works are scheduled for the spring and summer.

We have a new noticeboard which will be dedicated to flood information when needed, which will be installed soon and hopefully keep affected residents informed of warnings and actions being taken in emergencies.



Neighbourhood Wardens

The village has, thankfully, felt relatively quiet over the past year. This is not just good fortune – it does take effort. We are actively involved with the NAG (Neighbourhood Action Group), along with other parishes and the Police and Wardens, and work with Wardens weekly to keep the village safe and tidy.

• Council operations, People

We undertook a major refurbishment of the Parish Office in the Autumn of 2014. It had not changed, nor been decorated, in living memory and was increasingly becoming 'unfit for purpose' given the modern-day tasks of a Parish Council. We hope that the refit, which provided more office space and upgraded electrical and technology installations, will last for another 20+ years and allow more efficient working for all who use or visit the office.

We would like to remind parishioners that the office is open to the public for a number of purposes on Monday afternoon / evening, Thursday morning or by appointment at other times. If residents wish to see information sources or consult with councillors, please contact the Parish Office for an appointment, or visit between 14:00 and 18:30 on Mondays.

* Because of the possible elections for all councils and national government in May 2015, the people elected and forming the council will change, so please be aware that the table of councillors at the back of this report will also change slightly, in terms of personnel and positions.

- We advised parishioners this year that the Farmer's Market needed more custom to guarantee its' survival. Residents have responded, but still, please tell everyone to come along – not only are you supporting a valued resource for the village, but buying really good produce as well.

• Housing / Development

The Council's Planning Committee meets twice per month (1st & 3rd Mondays at 6:00pm) to consider planning applications. The committee continues to be busy, as there have been, and still are, some large and some controversial applications under consideration.

West Berkshire Council have been gradually preparing a strategic Development Plan Document (DPD), as have most councils across the country. This plan is mandated by national government to provide the housing that the country is deemed to need. We have been consulted on plans for Purley on Thames and adjacent areas of Tilehurst, and the current task has been to identify the most important sites for new residential development. You can see the proposals on the WBC web site, or by visiting the Parish Office (by appointment if you can).

Recreation and Youth



New play equipment at Goosecroft

The Recreation Committee manage the two recreation grounds, Goosecroft and Bucknells Meadow, and they try to encourage youth initiatives in the village. The grounds are used for both formal sports and casual recreation, and enjoyed by hundreds of people each year.

In 2014, the Goosecroft Play Area was upgraded with new play equipment, and existing items repainted, so that the whole area looks renewed. Already we have seen increased use by lots of very enthusiastic young children. Although the Council used some of our own reserves for this, we also managed to acquire significant grant money from West Berkshire and from the Lottery Fund to make those reserves go further.

The Youth Club in the lower village, successful for many years, has ceased operations, for the time being. This is mainly because local children of the appropriate age had simply grown older and now need a different stimulus – it is a natural process, and the Council is pleased that its sponsorship helped the club when it was needed. Thanks to all the people that dedicated much time and enthusiasm to running the club.

Thanks to the volunteer effort of one councillor, we have sponsored a small garden at the Lock, in order to help keep the lock area attractive for the many people who visit the lock – and not only in boats...

We looked at making better use of Bucknell's Meadow with regular football fixtures, but could not find an immediate solution to a number of problems including car parking, changing facilities and toilets, etc. So, for the time being, that use has been put 'on hold'. However, we have started a group to manage and develop Bucknell's Meadow for the future.

As we grow the recreation facilities in the village, so our job of maintaining them to a high standard increases. This will be the main focus for the next period.

The Barn Community Centre

The Barn is a highly valued venue these days, and becomes busier each year. This is very good financially, as it enables a fantastic facility to exist and satisfy the requirements of a wide range of users, but it also increases our management and administration workload which keeps our staff under pressure. We also need to be mindful of neighbours, and keep any disturbance to a minimum.



Large hall of the Barn

The management committee has been busy:

- A new PA system with a hearing loop has been installed;
- Re-decoration is continuing gradually;
- A strategic plan is under development;
- Heating for toilets has been implemented.

The types of usage have widened in recent years. It is well known for being the home of the Scouts and a number of local societies for meetings and recreation, and for hosting theatrical and musical performances. Now it is also the venue for training courses and classes of various sorts, and some (gentle) indoor sport is even contemplated.

The Barn car park has flooded several times through the year, and the committee with the Assistant Clerk, are working to restore the drainage system to full working order.

The Barn Management committee have also taken over responsibility for the adjacent Burial Ground, and are putting in a programme for keeping it looking as attractive as possible for visitors and relatives.

Highways and Transport

In the past year:

- The Council has purchased the Allotments land from the landowners. This was done to secure the permanent future of the allotments, and it now enables us to work with the plot-holders to manage the facility to mutual advantage with no externally-imposed restrictions. It also saves us the annual costs of rental, and the Council is always looking to achieve better value for money for residents.
- The Council also saved money by negotiating a new contract for grounds maintenance for the village. Grounds maintenance is a mixture of footpaths, recreation areas and roadside features which obviously need constant attention to both look good and be safe. So far, we have been very pleased with the result.
- Although it took a long time coming, 2014 finally saw the road through the old village resurfaced. The road had deteriorated badly since the heavy traffic of the bridges re-construction had started to break up the surface. We also asked for, and got, surface repairs at the west end of Hazel Road, which residents were very concerned about.
- The footpath alongside the A329 between Purley and Pangbourne has been gradually narrowing over recent years, collecting debris from the field banks, and this was worrying pedestrians using the path besides fast-moving traffic. This has now been cleared and effectively widened (January), making the stretch much safer to walk.
- The Council has commissioned a new map of Purley on Thames, particularly highlighting the walking routes around the village. This replaces an old, hand-drawn map that served this purpose very successfully for many years, but is now out of date. We hope that the map will be available to residents and visitors from several locations in the village.

The Highways and Footpaths committee are responsible for monitoring roads and footpaths, working with West Berkshire (WBC) Highways department for roads improvements, maintaining the main footpaths in the village, providing litter bins and other 'road furniture', and also looking after the allotments and the Pikeshaw woodland.

The committee continues to look at parking issues around the village, particularly in Hazel Road and Huckleberry Close, but also in other key areas, and we want to improve public communications by replacing old noticeboards gradually.

Finance - how we use 'your' money

The Council is conscious that we are spending your money, and that we have a responsibility to spend it wisely, and carefully. We managed to reduce non-capital spending slightly from £131,000 last year, down to around £125,000 in 2014/15. We did use reserves for some capital projects – Allotments, Recreation, refurbishing the office – to complete a three year period of active improvements to village services and facilities. These figures are provisional, as our accounts are not finalised until the summer.

Figure 1: Income:

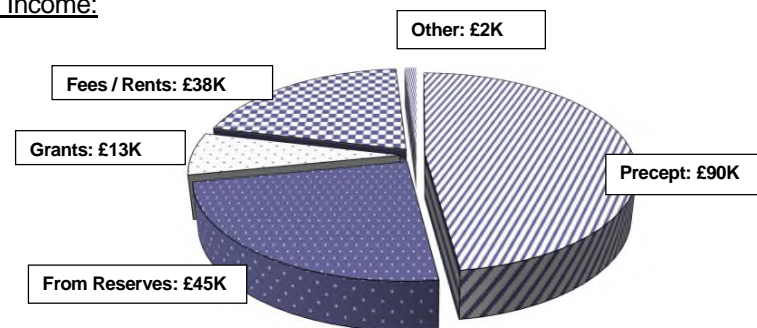
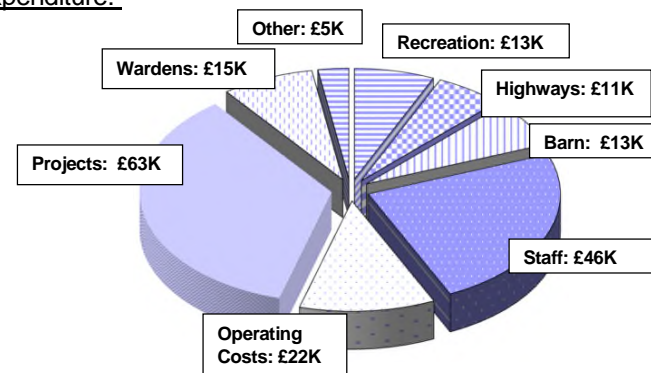


Figure 2: Expenditure:



We produce income from hires and grants and in other ways, but our main source of funding comes from the Precept, the very small element of Council Tax charged to householders for the Parish Council, which this year equated to around £46 per household.

Full accounts can be viewed at the Parish Office, or on the web site when published.

How to contact us

Parish Office: Telephone: 0118 984 4507
 Email: clerk@purleyonthames-pc.gov.uk
 Write: Parish Office, Goosecroft Lane, off Beech Road, Purley on Thames, RG8 8DR
 Website: www.purleyonthames-pc.gov.uk (lots of contacts and information)
 Clerk: Janet Field (Mrs)
 Assistant Clerk: Christine Lamb (Mrs)

Opening hours

The Parish Office is open to the public during the following hours:
 Monday (except bank Holidays) 2.00pm to 6.30pm
 Thursday 9.30am to 2.30pm
 Councillors are available for consultation on Monday evenings, between 5.30 – 6.30pm, or other times by appointment.

Members and Staff

 Rick Jones* Chairman & Highways 0118 962 3793	 Bernard Nix Vice Chairman & Barn 0118 942 1067	 Rick Farrow Recreation 0118 962 4577	 Graham Rolfe Planning 0118 941 7247	 Bill Ayling 0118 941 9437
 Pamela Beddoes 0118 941 4186	 Sue Briscoe 0118 945 6085	 John Chapman 0118 942 6999	 Christine Collier 0118 942 2951	 Martin Bishop 0118 945 3117
 Neil Haughton via office	 Stuart Chester 0118 942 2951	 Tim Metcalfe* 0118 942 8001	 Janet Field Parish Clerk 0118 984 4507	 Christine Lamb Asst Clerk 0118 984 4507

* Also our District Councillors.

Andrew Thompson is an advisor to the Council. Our Caretaker at Goosecroft is Joe Nash.

Useful Numbers

Community Safety:

Neighbourhood Wardens 0118 945 5286
 Police Non-Emergency 101
 Lock Keeper 0118 941 7776

District Council:

West Berkshire Council 01635 42400
 WBC emergency out of hours 01635 42161
 Streetcare 01635 519080

Purley Barn

Via Parish Office 0118 984 4507

Goosecroft Caretaker

07901 640517

Social Clubs

Purley Sports & Social Club 0118 984 3061
 Purley Park Social Club 0118 942 7047

Schools

Purley C.E. School 0118 984 2384
 Long Lane Primary School 0118 942 7187
 Denefield School 0118 941 3458
 Theale Green School 0118 930 2741
 Westwood Farm School 0118 942 5182
 Westwood Farm Infant School 0118 942 6113

Doctors

Pangbourne Medical Practice 0118 984 2234
 Tilehurst, Overdown Rd 0118 942 5432
 Tilehurst Partnership, Tyler's Place 0118 942 7528

Travel

Reading Buses www.reading-buses.co.uk 0118 959 4000
 REDIbus www.readibus.co.uk 0118 931 0000
 First GW Trains www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk 0345 7000 125
 Thames Travel www.thames-travel.co.uk 01865 785 400
 Pangbourne & District Volunteer Centre 0118 984 4586